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United for Quality Care

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Barbara Ocasio, CNA  
Hartford  
District 1199NE

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Barbara Ocasio and I am a Certified Nurses Aide at Avery Heights in Hartford. I have been a CNA for over 18 years at my facility.

Over the years, my coworkers and myself have seen so many changes in the types of residents that we care for and the staffing ratios. Today's residents are much more complex than years prior. There are much more complex medical cases coming from the hospitals, behavioral patients, and residents suffering from substance abuse. These residents need much more time for care than the traditional elderly resident.

I find myself having to do double the work in the same amount of allotted hours, which makes it very difficult to give quality care. I treat my residents like they are family because they are my extended family. It is a horrible feeling when you cannot care for your residents the way you know they should be cared for.

Staff have been working very hard and many of us are tired. Our residents' acuity has risen, we have less staff, more workers are being hurt on the job, and we care for more residents than we did years prior. It has been a hard road but doesn't seem to be getting any better. The staff that have stayed since Covid are now working double shifts to ensure the residents receive care. I do not know how much longer we will all be able to continue working the way we are. We need hope....Hope that staffing issues will change. Hope that facilities will have to change the staffing levels at long term care facilities. Hope that we can give quality care. Hope that we can secure more staff. Hope that employees will want to work in healthcare.

Since the start of Covid, many employees were and are fearful of entering the healthcare field. Many were fearful of continuing their careers in healthcare and they resigned, but the facility continues to take admissions. The community has a need for services at long term care facilities, however, we need workers! We need to be able to work a normal work week. We need time to care for our residents and provide quality care. We need to be able to not worry about becoming injured on the job because of the heavy workloads. We deserve time off to be with our families.

Please help us and the most vulnerable residents in the State of Connecticut. We need change!

Thank you for your time.